

To the members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am a resident of District 21, a retired Marriage and Family Therapist and Military and Family Life Counselor, former Congressional Fellow and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am **testifying in support of SB0275**, which will create an insurance fund to provide individuals throughout the state of Maryland with compensated time off to attend to specific health issues to include the birth of a child, the care of a family member with a serious health condition, and to prepare for the deployment of a service member, among other reasons.

Years ago I worked in a Congressional office when we were trying to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was unpaid leave. Would you believe it took 9 years to simply not have people be fired for taking care of an ill family member? That bill was finally passed in 1993 – 29 years ago. During that time it has become abundantly clear that having one's job protected while having no income is not a workable solution.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we see how inequitable the situation has been for workers. Paid sick leave is something often only afforded to those in specific jobs, usually people who already have higher means. Those in our society on whom we have depended heavily, our front-line and essential personnel who are employed in service and food industry jobs, among others, are often left to fend for themselves financially when it comes to taking time off work. When these individuals need to spend time at home recovering from illnesses or other major life events, it often means there is little or no money coming into the household. Their bills (e.g. rent, utilities, and car loans) are still due each month and they still need to put food on their table for their family. This often leaves these individuals with no choice but to go to work sick.

This insurance fund will provide enormous relief to Maryland citizens who find themselves in this position. The fund will be paid into by employers and employees, similar to how a retirement account with matching funds works, and will allow workers to maintain their income even if they need to step away from work for up to 12 weeks.

There are so many reasons the average individual needs to be home from work for up to 12 weeks. Parents in America today must rely on the generosity of their employers to receive any paid leave after having a baby or adopting a child, for example. I remember working in an organization that provided some paid leave for parents after a child was born. A coworker of mine received that after the birth of her baby. But her ill newborn died a few weeks later and Human Resources told her that since she didn't have a baby anymore, she did not qualify for the paid parental leave. This, needless to say, was inhumane. We cannot leave this up to individual companies.

As a therapist, I cannot express to you strongly enough the importance of emotional attachment of parents and children. Not only for babies, but for children when they face scary operations and procedures or are very ill. And even for adult children and their elderly parents to have ir retrievable time when a parent has a terminal disease.

As a Military and Family Life Counselor, I worked with soldiers and their families before and after deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Army spouses are serving the American public by all that they do to help their mate, to help their children adjust, and to take care of themselves during stressful times. They should be paid for the time they need to take off from their jobs. Frankly, that is the least we should do.

For these reasons I ask you to support SB0275.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

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